



# Bitterroot National Forest

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **"Formal Public Scoping Period Begins for Bitterroot Travel Management Planning With Release of Proposed Action"**

**Hamilton, Montana, September 24, 2007** — After months of considering input from a variety of public and agency sources, the Bitterroot National Forest has crafted a Proposed Action for its Travel Management Planning project.

The Forest is undertaking this travel management planning effort in order to re-examine and clarify where motorized recreation is appropriate, sustainable and desirable on the non-wilderness portions of the Bitterroot National Forest. In its initial proposal, the Forest is suggesting some changes to both summer and winter motorized recreational use on specific roads, trails and areas. "Our goal, explains Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Dave Bull, "Is to develop a mix of motorized and non-motorized opportunities that provide quality experiences and protect the natural resources, then clearly illustrate those opportunities on a map that is easy to understand and use."

The Proposed Action is the first step in the National Environmental Policy Action (NEPA) environmental analysis process. "The proposed action is the first step, or starting point, in the process of deciding what roads, trails and areas on the Bitterroot National Forest are appropriate for motorized use, and which roads, trails and areas should be managed for non-motorized users," stresses Stevensville District Ranger Dan Ritter, who was appointed by Supervisor Bull to lead the effort. "We've worked with several groups throughout the past year or two who have expressed concerns about some aspect of motorized use, and we want to continue this dialog with our users as we move forward in this project."

Public meetings to discuss the proposed action are planned for November before the end of the comment period. Dates, times and locations will be announced later. By early December, the Forest will utilize the public comments received to develop alternatives and evaluation criteria. Ritter expects to have a draft Environmental Impact Statement available for public review by August 2008, and a final EIS completed by May, 2009.

Public comments on the Proposed Action are due by November 23, 2007 and should be mailed to the Travel Management Planning Team, Stevensville Ranger District, 88 Main Street, Stevensville, MT 59870. Comments can also be faxed to (406) 777-7423 or emailed to [comments-northern-bitterroot@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-bitterroot@fs.fed.us).

For more information about the project please contact: Dan Ritter, Stevensville District Ranger at (406) 777-5461, or the Project Team Leader Sandy Mack at (406) 777-7415. Travel Management planning documents will be posted on the internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot/projects/> and the public can view paper copies

of the maps at libraries in Missoula, Stevensville, Hamilton, and Darby, and at Forest Service offices in Stevensville, Hamilton, Darby, Sula and West Fork.

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